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First Committee

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Official Records

Chairperson: Mrs. Juul (Norway)

The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Agenda items 82 to 97 (continued)

Thematic discussion on item subjects, as well as the introduction and consideration of all draft resolutions submitted under all disarmament and international security agenda items

The Chairperson: In accordance with the programme of work and our timetable the Committee will begin this afternoon the second phase of its work, namely the thematic discussion on item subjects, as well as the introduction and consideration of all draft resolutions submitted under all disarmament and related international security agenda items.

As already mentioned, there will be no formal list of speakers for the second stage of our work. I would, therefore, encourage delegations to inform the Secretariat of their plans to speak, prior to the specific meeting. If not, requests for all interventions will be taken directly from the floor on the given day.

As agreed, this afternoon the Committee will have an exchange with the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, the Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament, the Director-General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and the Executive Secretary of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO) Preparatory Commission, on the current state of affairs in the field of arms control and disarmament and the roles of the respective organizations.

First, I will give the floor to the panellists to make their statements, and then delegations will have the opportunity to ask questions of them.

First, I will invite the Executive Secretary of the CTBTO Preparatory Commission, Mr. Tibor Tóth, to make his statement. As his travel schedule does not allow him to stay through the entire meeting, he will therefore begin.

Mr. Tóth (CTBTO): As Executive Secretary of the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization, it is a great honour for me to again have the opportunity to address the First Committee, and to provide a brief report about the status and activities of the Preparatory Commission. This year marks the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty by the General Assembly. Ten years into the life of the Preparatory Commission there is significant progress to report, both regarding universalization of the Treaty and its verifiability.

However, on the occasion of the tenth anniversary, we are also reminded of the serious challenges that remain. I share the deep concern and strong condemnation expressed, generated by today's announcement by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea that it had conducted a nuclear test. That occurred in spite of the strong appeals of the international community. Such action goes against the letter and the spirit of the treaties that I continue to hope the Democratic People's Republic of Korea will sign and ratify.

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The support demonstrated for the Treaty, which has been signed by 176 States and ratified by 135 States, highlights the commitment of the international community to establish a universal and verifiable Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

Since I reported to you last year, there has been significant progress in universalization, notwithstanding the challenges I just described to you. Ten more States have ratified the Treaty, bringing the number of ratifications to 135. Of the 44 so-called Annex 2 States, whose ratification is necessary for entry into force, 34 have already ratified. On 20 September, I attended the ministerial meeting of the Friends of the CTBT here in New York, co-hosted by Australia, Canada, Finland, Japan and the Netherlands. The meeting was well attended by representatives of 61 States, including 22 ministers and high-level officials. The joint ministerial statement, which was welcomed by the Secretary-General, reaffirmed full support for the objectives of the CTBT and the work of the Preparatory Commission.

Since 1997, the Preparatory Commission has been working to ensure that the CTBT verification regime is credible, functional and cost-effective. We are now entering a crucial phase in the building of the International Monitoring System. As of today, 72 per cent of the station network has been installed, and 54 per cent has been certified, meaning that the stations meet the stringent specifications of the Preparatory Commission. In the immediate future, the task of provisionally operating and maintaining the verification regime will become more important. Additional staffing and evaluation of the verification regime will be further proof that the CTBTO is equipped with a robust verification regime capable of detecting nuclear test explosions and all other nuclear explosions everywhere in the world as mandated in the Treaty. Data from the established stations are flowing via our global communications infrastructure to the International Data Centre in Vienna. At this nerve centre of the verification system, incoming data are collected, processed, analysed and transmitted to the States signatories for final analysis. Currently, 93 national data centres are in operation and receive Provisional Technical Secretariat data products. Another key element of the Treaty's verification regime being developed is on-site inspections. The purpose of conducting an on-site inspection is to determine whether a nuclear explosion has been carried

out in violation of the Treaty and provide data for a final decision of the Executive Council. A well-prepared oversight regime should serve as the final verification tool, discouraging any potential violation of the Treaty, because of the high probability of exposure. The oversight regime has reached a point that will make it possible to conduct a major on-site exercise in 2008.

The CTBT verification regime empowers each State signatory to take a decision about ambiguous events and possibly request an on-site inspection based on the data and products provided by the CTBTO and its own national technical resources. In this respect, the CTBTO enables States, regardless of their size and wealth, to participate fully in the verification work and benefit from the wealth of data provided by the monitoring system for a variety of potentially important civil and scientific applications. During the past year, the Preparatory Commission has continued to discuss the potential contribution of the International Monitoring System data to the tsunami-warning system. I am confident that the upcoming meeting of the Preparatory Commission will approve provision by the Provisional Technical Secretariat to provide tsunami-warning organizations with relevant data on a continuous and real-time basis.

Let me conclude by stating that the building of a verification regime would be impossible without the political and financial commitment of States signatories, and without the expertise, talent and dedication of the experts working as delegates. While all of us involved in the work of the Preparatory Commission can be proud of the continuous progress that we collectively are making in building up the system, the past few days were a clear reminder of the political reality in which we operate. Ultimately, all our work — and, in particular the sophisticated verification regime — will show its worth only once the CTBT has entered into force. The States listed in Annex 2 of the CTBT, whose ratification is necessary for the entry into force must consider the value of the treaty for their national security and for international security. The reliable performance of the verification regime and the example of the growing number of States ratifying the Treaty should, I hope, help all the Annex 2 States to take a positive decision. It is my sincere hope that the current situation will further highlight the importance of the Treaty and will lead to an even stronger effort to ensure its early entry into force.

The meeting was suspended at 3.15 p.m. and resumed at 3.20 p.m.

The Chairperson: I now invite the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Nabuaki Tanaka, to make a statement to the Committee.

Mr. Tanaka (Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs): We meet today in a grim world with a range of challenges, old and new. Unfortunately, today we are quite disturbed and concerned by the news that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea has conducted a nuclear test. The Secretary-General expressed his deep concern that this action violates international disarmament and non-proliferation norms as well as the current international moratorium on nuclear testing. This international scene seems to have been covered by my initial intervention, so today I shall focus on what the United Nations system is doing to address these questions.

The system in which all of us are currently involved was established by nations of the world to serve their common security interests. Specific issues relating to weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) are the focus of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO) Preparatory Commission. Other efforts are also under way, for example, to control the trade in sensitive technologies or materials needed to make or deliver such weapons.

While there is not yet any global treaty regulating the trade in conventional arms, efforts are under way to strengthen cooperation among States and organizations that seek to curb the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, to eliminate landmines and to prohibit certain weapons that States regard as inhumane.

Some of these controls can be advanced through unilateral, bilateral, plurilateral or regional initiatives. Yet, when the goal is to achieve a solution to a problem that is truly global in scope, none of these initiatives will suffice. Something else is needed — something global, something multilateral, something with legitimacy and legal authority.

To deal with such problems, the system has led to the development of a group of focused, intergovernmental organizations. The need for such organizations arises out of the global scope of the problems posed by certain weapons systems, as well as

the political or technical complexity of regulating or eliminating such weapons. No single State, group of States or organization can solve all of these problems while acting alone.

Two such institutions are represented here on this panel today — the OPCW and the CTBTO — and they are different in many ways. Yet, they also have a lot in common. Together, they contribute to strengthening the rule of law with respect to nuclear and chemical weapons.

The global effort to promote disarmament, however, requires something more than an archipelago of intergovernmental organizations; and this is where the United Nations has been able to make its best contributions. It has many functions, but one of the most important is to promote synergy — that is, to help States and other intergovernmental organizations to solve challenges as effectively as possible, on a global scale, by minimizing duplication of effort, improving information sharing and reinforcing the basic legitimacy of collective action to address such threats. Historically, the United Nations has provided a solid foundation of diplomatic support for the conclusion of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). Both were negotiated at the Conference on Disarmament and endorsed by the General Assembly. The United Nations also facilitated the negotiation of many other key multilateral treaties.

In the Secretariat, the Department for Disarmament Affairs continues to serve as a common partner for numerous intergovernmental organizations working in this field and has been working to strengthen cooperation. For example, the Department for Disarmament Affairs is helping States and a wide variety of organizations to grapple with problems created by the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. Our assistance is apparent in the administrative and substantive support we provide at international meetings and multilateral negotiations, such as the latest Review Conference on the Programme of Action on the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, the Open-ended Working Group on marking and tracing, as well as in several regional and subregional initiatives undertaken by our three United Nations regional centres.

Much of this work has a cross-cutting impact and fosters synergy among many other activities of the

United Nations, in such fields as development and humanitarian assistance and in addressing the special concerns of women and children. To ensure that the work of the United Nations in this field is both multidisciplinary and coherent, the Secretary-General in 1998 designated the Department for Disarmament Affairs as the focal point for coordinating all actions on small arms and light weapons within the United Nations system. The internal United Nations mechanism to achieve this goal is called Coordinating Action on Small Arms (CASA), which includes representatives from 16 intergovernmental organizations in the United Nations system. I encourage your support for this mechanism, which can be instrumental in improving the quality and coordination of United Nations assistance to Member States. Together, these efforts have produced some impressive concrete results. For example, it has destroyed some 570,000 small arms and 70 tons of explosives in Latin American regions. As public awareness grows over the economic, social and security implications from the illicit trade in such items, the demand for such projects will continue to grow.

The Department for Disarmament Affairs maintains the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms and promotes usage of the United Nations standardized instrument for reporting military expenditures. In the area of landmines, the Geneva branch of the Department for Disarmament Affairs services key meetings of the parties to the Ottawa Convention on Landmines and cooperates closely with the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining. The Geneva branch, led by my colleague, Mr. Ordzhonikidze, who is in attendance here now, similarly assists parties to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons in pursuing the elimination of the inhumane weapons covered by that Convention. Mr. Ordzhonikidze also serves as the Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament.

In the nuclear field, we work closely with the IAEA to promote, through workshops, seminars, and official statements, non-proliferation and safeguards objectives, including encouragement of States to sign and ratify the Additional Protocol. We provide substantive and administrative support to the five-year Review Conferences of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and the sessions of its Preparatory Committees.

We also promote nuclear-weapon-free zones. The recent signing of a treaty creating a Central Asian

nuclear-weapon-free zone marks a critical step in the evolution of these zones. It marks the first such zone to be created entirely north of the Equator, covering large areas where many nuclear weapons were once deployed. Our role in promoting such zones is guided both by the 1999 guidelines adopted by the United Nations Disarmament Commission and by mandates that we are given by States. The next step forward will be for the States in this zone to enter into meaningful negotiations with the nuclear-weapon States to achieve their commitment to the necessary security assurances. I am glad to see that the process is under way with the five Central Asian States taking an initiative for such consultations. The Department for Disarmament Affairs is prepared to assist in any way to achieve this goal, in accordance with the mandates we have been given.

In the framework of the Secretary-General's efforts to strengthen cooperation with regional and intergovernmental organizations, the Department for Disarmament Affairs leads the Working Group on Disarmament and Non-Proliferation within the United Nations system. Its recommendations on ways to improve cooperation and coordination were recently approved by the Secretary-General's seventh High-Level Meeting with the heads of regional and other intergovernmental organizations, held last month.

Today's world is encountering new challenges that the founders of the United Nations did not envisage at the inception of the Organization. Given the increasing examples of nuclear non-compliance and aberrations from the NPT regime and norms that have taken place in recent years, I would foresee an even closer relationship between the Security Council and the IAEA in terms of consultations and information sharing, because the Security Council is the only mechanism mandated to determine the existence of a threat to peace, a breach of peace or an act of aggression. This should be done, in cases involving WMDs, only with the technical advice of the relevant organizations. Unfortunately, we have not had a mechanism to carry out such consultations in the past among agencies and organizations concerned with disarmament and non-proliferation. Even between the First Committee and the Conference on Disarmament there is only a superficial relationship.

It is true that not every security problem requires a solution based at the United Nations. The problem of anti-personnel landmines is often cited as an example of how arms control can advance through agreements

reached outside the United Nations. Strategic nuclear arms control has proceeded on such a basis for years, as have several regional security initiatives.

Yet, when such problems are truly global in scope, the case for a coordinated global response becomes all the more compelling, and no organization is better positioned to address such problems on a planetary scale than the United Nations. It has a universal membership; it has a common Charter that is binding upon all its Members; and it provides the indispensable common ground for deliberating the many problems of international peace and security. When its Member States unite, the United Nations becomes the world's largest and potentially most effective coalition of the willing. It is this quality that gives the United Nations its continuing relevance in addressing our gravest security threats and in building a better future for all.

The Chairperson: I now give the floor to Mr. Sergei Ordzhonikidze, Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament.

Mr. Ordzhonikidze (Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament): This is the first time, I believe, that we have tried to organize such an interactive dialogue and I would like to thank you, Madam Chair, and the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs. Maybe this dialogue will be helpful to the Conference on Disarmament, as some of our colleagues from the First Committee — with which the Under-Secretary-General said a much closer relationship should be cultivated — might be able to help us enlarge our thinking. There is obviously not enough imagination in the Conference to resolve the issue of our current deadlock. I would like to emphasize that finding solutions to the problems in the Conference on Disarmament requires a sort of circuit breaker.

There are growing doubts as to whether the Conference can survive another year without a solution. At a minimum, I have such doubts and would like to express them to the First Committee in order to come up with different ideas or perhaps to provoke the Committee to prove me wrong. It must be taken into consideration that the Five Ambassadors' proposal and similar comprehensive and balanced proposals will hardly enjoy consensus. Stand-alone negotiations on the fissile material agreement within the Conference are, therefore, not an option either. It would not be

surprising if an initiative emerged to consider moving the fissile material negotiations away from the Conference on Disarmament, and maybe even some other problems on the Conference's agenda as well. Other organs might be more helpful in that area. Of course, nothing will happen unless there is a consensus. By the same token, one can wonder, given the existence of the consensus rule, why the reluctant members are not even willing to commence negotiations, when they have the capacity and indeed the right to protect their national positions if there are prospects of a compromise.

Incidentally, the Blix Commission recommended that the Conference should be able to adopt its programme of work by a two-thirds majority of members present and voting. Maybe we should think about that as well.

In assessing other possible ways forward, certain things are quite clear. First, the prospects for changing the rules of procedure to make it easier for the Conference to break its deadlock are slight at best. It is a very difficult problem and I don't think that we will be able, frankly speaking, to solve that issue. To me, it looks like a non-option. There is very little appetite for yet another plenary debate on the issues. A qualitative increase in engagement on substantive matters will be required in order to avoid permanent disillusionment with the Conference on Disarmament amongst its members. As noted already, the Five Ambassadors' proposal, although widely supported, will never, in my view, attract a consensus. How should we proceed?

New proposals de-emphasizing linkages among the four core issues have not yet gained any traction. As you all know, I am very much in favour of those kinds of proposals.

There is a growing acceptance that it may be possible to delink the core issues through the understanding that the fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT) will be negotiated in tandem with some form of lesser treatment of all or some of the other three core issues. The FMCT is particularly relevant now, taking into account, as mentioned by the Under-Secretary-General, the dramatic news today of the testing of a nuclear weapon by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Next, a parallel process needs to be set up. Of course, it will be complicated, given the need for decisions on the process, i.e. the preparation of

subsidiary bodies and the selection of chairs for any such bodies. Alternatives might be, as I have always said, to take up the issues at plenary meetings. It is not important that it be a working group meeting or a plenary meeting. The important thing is that we have to at least open article I of the main core issues and we have to start with the FMCT, taking into account the recent political developments.

Member States wishing to play an active role in helping the Conference to overcome its impasse could consider several possible avenues.

First, countries that remain most enamoured of the Five Ambassadors' proposal should realize that continued stultification of the Conference's work may well lead to its demise and the pursuit of the security agenda through other avenues — over which we at the Conference would have little or no control at all — such as the Security Council or other organs of the United Nations.

Secondly, exploring an idea that has been mentioned from time to time by some Member States on previous occasions in the Conference on Disarmament, the Conference could establish a group of scientific experts to prepare the ground for negotiations on, for example, the FMCT.

Thirdly, one could encourage the incoming President of South Africa to consider taking a bold approach, based on the 10 available meetings per week of the Conference on Disarmament, whereby there would be a preponderance of sessions devoted to the FMCT. However, there would also be scope for consideration of the other core issues, as well as some time allocated to general business, including any new or additional issues. Such a schedule would need to be calibrated in such a way as to not give rise to overwhelming demands on resources, especially for small delegations.

Members might ask questions about the resourcing of the Conference on Disarmament, if we intensify our meetings, and perhaps even on the availability of the Council Chamber in the Palais for next year's session. But members may also comment that the first thing is for the Conference on Disarmament to get down to its substantive work as soon as possible. As soon as it does, the necessary resources should quickly mobilize — at least those that depend on the Office of the Director-General of the United Nations in Geneva. I promise, as I did before, to

give the Committee all the necessary resources within my power.

Actually, I probably cannot convince members politically and I come back to the problems of scheduling meetings and resourcing. I will try to be a little more inventive and not to only address tiresome political arguments. Since we have an audience here that is larger than our Conference on Disarmament audience, there may be some other delegations that could contribute to our interesting discussions on the issue.

The Chairperson: I give the floor to Mr. Rogelio Pfirter, Director-General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons.

Mr. Pfirter (Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons): Allow me first, to begin by expressing my gratitude to you, Madam Chair, for having provided this opportunity. I am also delighted to share the podium with the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs and the Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament. Mr. Tanaka expressed some ideas that I would echo, including those concerning cooperation between different organizations.

Above all, it gives me great pleasure to address the First Committee once again. This Committee plays such a pivotal role in guiding the international disarmament agenda and is crucially linked to the achievements of recognized milestones in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation.

Although my organization is totally independent from the United Nations, we believe it is proper and incumbent upon us to come here and pay tribute to the work of the Committee and to provide as much information as we can. I apologize in advance, if my report is a bit extensive. But, I think members of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) would expect me to provide such a comprehensive view to your Committee.

The tenth anniversary of the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention and the creation of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons will fall on 29 April 2007. Within a relatively short time span and despite the ebb and flow we have seen in the wider field of disarmament and non-proliferation, the Chemical Weapons Convention has been accepted more and more broadly by the international community as a credible and unique

instrument for the destruction and future non-proliferation of a whole category of weapons of mass destruction. It is being effectively implemented, in particular its disarmament agenda, and the OPCW has emerged as a solid institution that is carrying out its mandate with determination.

We remain steadfast in our goal of completely ridding the planet of chemical weapons. Our membership has been increasing steadily and has recently reached the impressive figure of 180 States parties.

While it is natural to take some satisfaction from such achievements, we are nevertheless fully conscious of the many significant challenges that lie ahead. There remain a small number of countries that have yet to join the Convention. They number only 15 and we know that some of them are effectively moving towards joining us. However, a few others appear to be putting off joining the Convention almost indefinitely. The latter group of States are players in well-known sensitive regions of the world. The fact remains, however, that it is precisely in areas of conflict that we need, in the interest of peace and security, to insure complete chemical disarmament in accordance with the spirit and provisions of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

I will say more about universality later in my statement. At this stage, let me mention the equally indispensable need to secure the effective implementation, in full and on time by all States party to the Convention, of their obligations under it.

With that point in mind, I would like to offer a brief overview of current developments in the area of chemical disarmament or destruction of weapons and non-proliferation. The framers of the Convention set States parties in possession of chemical weapons the ambitious task of destroying over 71,000 metric tons of chemical warfare agents and nearly 9 million munitions by the year 2012 at the latest. Eliminating that huge stockpile of extremely toxic and dangerous substances, while ensuring that neither people nor the environment are harmed, was always going to be a daunting challenge for the States parties.

The destruction of more than 14,700 metric tons of chemical warfare agents in six possessor States has been verified, and that represents over 20 per cent of the total declared stockpile in the world. Similarly, the destruction of 2.6 million munitions and containers, more than one-quarter of the declared stockpile, has been verified by OPCW inspection teams.

While those figures are a sign of steady progress, it is just as clear that the majority of the world's stockpile of chemical weapons has yet to be destroyed. Five possessor States parties have requested extensions of final destruction deadlines to dates beyond 2007, with plans to eliminate their declared chemical weapons stockpiles before April 2012, which is the final — I would say sacrosanct — deadline set by the Convention.

The lion's share of resources and inspection time is devoted to the destruction campaigns in the two largest possessor States — the Russian Federation and the United States of America, which have declared the largest stockpiles. In the Russian Federation, the chemical weapons destruction programme is gaining the necessary momentum. Operations at the destruction facility in Gornyy were completed in December 2005. Two new facilities in Kambarka and Maradykovsky became operational in December 2005 and August 2006, respectively. The Russian Federation plans to begin destroying chemical weapons at three other chemical weapons destruction facilities, located in Leonidovka, Pochep and Shchuchye in 2008.

A fourth facility in Kizner, which is to be the last to be constructed, will be operational in 2009. The whole Russian chemical weapons stockpile, comprising more than 39,000 metric tons of blister and organophosphorous agents, is thus scheduled for destruction by April 2012. Those plans reinforce the assurance of the Government of the Russian Federation of its resolve to accelerate the pace of construction and to meet its solemn obligations under the Convention to do so. I commend both the Russian effort and the commitment underlying it. Such positive signs are most welcome, since until recently the slow pace at which the Russian Federation's large stockpile was being destroyed caused understandable concern. On the same subject, I applaud the assistance of the Group of Eight countries and other donor States to support the destruction programme of the Russian Federation and I hope that vital cooperation will continue and will be further reinforced in the future.

In the United States of America, nine destruction facilities are currently operational, and more than 36 per cent of that country's stockpile has been destroyed to date. These figures make abundantly clear the commitment of the United States to comply with its obligations under the Convention, which is vitally important for the achievement of the Convention's

object and purpose. Scepticism and concern are sometimes expressed about whether chemical weapons can, in fact, be eliminated as the Convention foresees and requires, namely, in time and in good form. I continue to remain positive and optimistic on this matter because, as members of the Committee undoubtedly know, there is a strong political commitment by the major possessor States to achieve that goal.

Two conditions are essential in order for efforts in this vital area to be sustained. There must be, first, an unwavering political will, and secondly, assuming that there is such political will, specific plans for the destruction of chemical weapons stockpiles. I will continue to urge all States parties to approach this matter in a constructive spirit and to support Governments in their efforts to achieve the targets concerned.

There are some important milestones that indicate that we are on track. In addition to the chemical weapons stockpiles, all 65 former chemical weapons production facilities declared by 12 States parties have been permanently de-activated. The destruction or conversion for legitimate purposes of over 87 per cent of those facilities has already been certified by OPCW inspectors and the remainder of them is expected to be destroyed by the end of 2007 or converted by the end of 2008.

A good example of this beating of swords into ploughshares is the conversion by the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya of its former chemical weapons production facility in Rabta, which will be devoted to produce to low-cost vaccines and medicines for the African continent. The Libyan Arab Jamahiriya's chemical weapons stockpile is now expected to be destroyed by the year 2011, following its request for extensions of its intermediate and final destruction deadlines.

By November 2003, and ahead of schedule, India had achieved the destruction of 45 per cent of its stockpile. Chemical weapons are now being destroyed at India's second destruction facility. According to India's request for an extension of its final destruction deadline, all of its stockpiles will be eliminated by 28 April 2009, for which I commend India. In this case, another State party continues to move steadily towards fulfilment of its obligation to eliminate its chemical weapons stockpiles.

Finally, Albania is also moving forward and we expect it to be able to start disposing of its declared

stockpile no later than November of this year. Albania recently requested the extension of its intermediate destruction deadlines but all declared chemical weapons will be destroyed, according to Albania's plan, by the end of April 2007.

We must persevere in upholding the provisions of the Chemical Weapons Convention that cover disarmament. But there are also other pressing priorities that need to be addressed. The Convention contains provisions and obligations that, if effectively implemented, will go a long way towards addressing the international community's heightened concerns about proliferation and possible terrorist acts perpetrated through the use of chemical weapons.

Lax controls over the trade in or manufacture or sale of toxic chemicals could not only lead to the proliferation of such chemicals but also heighten the risk of chemical terrorism, especially since the knowledge and skills needed to produce rudimentary types of chemical weapons are not difficult to acquire.

The Convention now covers over 98 per cent of the worldwide chemical industry relevant to it and over 90 per cent of the world's population. Over 2,500 inspections have been completed by OPCW inspection teams at more than 946 sites in 76 States parties. While the majority of such inspections have been conducted at production, storage and destruction facilities relating to chemical weapons, we have also completed over 1,100 industry inspections and we will continue to increase as needed the number of industrial inspections that will be conducted each year.

With the support and cooperation of our member States and, indeed, of the world's chemical industry, whose valuable endorsement for the Convention I would like to acknowledge, the non-proliferation and confidence-building regime of the Convention has gained global acceptance. However, we have to ensure that every State party to the CWC establishes the administrative and legislative measures to detect, pursue and prosecute any breach of the Convention by its nationals in its territory. Recognizing this imperative, the first Review Conference of the Chemical Weapons Convention, held in 2003, adopted an action plan to encourage all States parties, especially those that have fallen short in meeting their national implementation obligations, to take the steps necessary to meet their obligations under the Convention regarding this issue.

The Conference of the States Parties to the Convention at its tenth session, held last year, acknowledged the significant results achieved by States parties in implementing their obligations. There is an increasing number of States parties that are in the process of enacting the necessary legislation, including penal law provisions, or of adopting administrative measures.

The number of States parties that have enacted comprehensive legislation has increased from approximately 50 in October 2003 to 68 by the end of September 2006. In addition, 110 States parties have informed the secretariat of the legislative and administrative measures they have adopted. Of these, 93 have submitted the text of their implementing legislation. At the same time, the number of States parties that have designated or established a national authority had increased by the end of September 2006, from 126 to 168, or 94 per cent of all States parties. This is a very positive development.

Although these figures represent satisfactory progress in the implementation of the Plan of Action, clearly more must be done to ensure that the key provisions of the Convention, which require systematic declarations in the team monitoring, control and transfer of chemicals, and regulatory measures to identify and track chemicals of concern, are in place in each and every State party.

In the last few years, over 130 States parties to the Convention have requested and received from the secretariat and several States parties the support they have needed to establish their own capacity to apply the chemical weapons ban nationally. This year, again, the Conference will closely examine the status of the implementation of the Convention globally and will make appropriate recommendations if necessary.

It is evident that more needs to be done by a considerable number of States in order to fully implement the Convention in their territories. I urge those States to do so in the belief that full implementation by all member States is indispensable for the ultimate success of the Convention. The OPCW remains ready to actively support them in their endeavours to that end.

The United Nations has encouraged a similar approach with regard to the implementation of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004). Our outreach activities and a substantial programme of assistance have

contributed to the endeavours of many States parties in closing the gap between joining the Convention and implementing it. We are glad to add a new chapter to our ongoing collaboration with the United Nations, especially its Department for Disarmament Affairs in the context of its own outreach activities that are connected to the implementation of resolution 1540 (2004). I wish to assure Committee members that, through various forums organized by the United Nations in different regions of the world, the OPCW will continue to make active contributions by sharing its experience and its expertise with States Members of the United Nations with a view to advancing our common objectives.

Further efforts are being undertaken with the OPCW in the implementation of articles X and XI, which cover international cooperation and assistance. These are areas of particular interest to many member States whose economies are developing or are in transition. Contemporary security defects, including the possibility of the use of chemical weapons by non-State actors, have created a renewed interest in the ability of the OPCW to coordinate the delivery of emergency assistance to States parties in case of an attack or a threat of an attack by chemical weapons. Last year, we conducted a major field exercise, together with the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in the Ukraine, as well as with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)'s Disaster Relief Coordination Centre.

The OPCW and the United Nations enjoy fruitful cooperation in a number of areas, based on the Relationship Agreement between them. I believe that even more fruitful consequences can be expected, in view of the remarks by the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, remarks that I fully endorse. Links and cooperation in this sense are, as I said, growing, as is confidence that our collaboration will enable us to fulfil the expectations of Member States, as expressed in the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy adopted by the General Assembly in September 2006. This important strategy encourages the OPCW to continue to help build country capacity to prevent terrorists from accessing chemical materials, to ensure security of chemical and related facilities and to respond effectively in the event of an attack with such materials.

Allow me to recall once more that universal adherence to the Convention is an objective that is

fundamental to the goals of strengthening the global ban on chemical weapons and ensuring that the prohibition is accepted globally. We have seen enormous growth in that sense. There were 40 States not party to the Convention in 2003, when the universality action plan was adopted. Today there remain only 15. We warmly welcome the new accessions and ratifications.

By choosing to join the Convention, these new States parties have made a critical contribution to advancing the goals of disarmament and non-proliferation. Indeed, as I mentioned at the beginning of my statement, membership today stands at 180 countries. Of these, six have joined the Convention since I last addressed the Committee. They include Djibouti, Haiti, Liberia, the Comoros and — most recently — the Central African Republic, for which the Convention will enter into force on 20 October. For its part, Iraq has informed us that it is taking steps to accede to the Convention in the near future. We welcome the recent decision by the Council of Ministers of Iraq to recommend their country's accession to the Convention. We plan to build on our recent fruitful cooperation, which includes training opportunities for Iraqi officials, and we will continue to extend all possible assistance to help Iraq follow through on its decision to join the Convention.

On the other hand, despite the high level of participation in the Convention in all regions of the world, there is a gap — I have already referred to the 15 countries. Several of those that have not yet joined us have cited logistical or resource constraints as the cause of their delay in joining. Others have assured us that they are in the process of preparing to accede or ratify. The real concerns, however, lie elsewhere. There is an apparent lack of political will to join a treaty that conforms to the disarmament ideals of the international community in terms of its non-discriminatory character and its strong verification system.

A significant part of the Middle East represents a serious void in our map, since neither Egypt nor Israel, neither Lebanon nor Syria, has yet joined the Convention, even though, as is well known, Israel has signed it.

A similar situation exists in North-East Asia, where the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is still not a State party. I regret to say that North Korea is the only Member of the United Nations that has not

responded at all to any of our initiatives for contact and dialogue. When I consider this in the context of the news that has shocked the world today — that is, the claim by North Korea that it has conducted a nuclear test — I can only join others in expressing serious concern and condemnation regarding the security situation on the Korean peninsula.

The only other State in Asia that is not a party is Myanmar, which is, however, an original signatory to the Convention. By signing, it has indicated its political decision to respect the provisions of the Convention. We have intensified our interaction with Myanmar with a view to encouraging its ratification at the earliest opportunity. In that regard, when it joins, it will join not just the rest of the international community but, very specifically, its fellow countries in the Association of South-East Asian Nations, which is second to none in support of our Convention.

In the context of our broader approach to promoting the universality of the Chemical Weapons Convention, we are looking forward to a key event that will take place in the coming weeks. Our third workshop on the universality of the Convention in the Mediterranean basin and the Middle East will take place in Rome later this month, with the sponsorship and co-financing of the European Union and the strong support of the Italian Government, to both of which we would like to extend our gratitude. The meeting will follow earlier gatherings in Malta and Cyprus in 2004 and 2005, and will hopefully build up the fruitful exchanges that took place on both of those occasions.

I am grateful to the foreign ministers of Israel, Lebanon and Syria, each of whom has responded positively to my invitation by nominating an official delegation to participate in the event. This will allow each of those States not party to the Convention to take part in a candid, forward-looking dialogue that will have as a key aim their eventual adherence to the Convention. I also hope that we will be able to build on our positive contacts with Egypt, which, although it has not yet informed us that it will be going to Rome, has, however, been a key country, as we know, in the process that led to the Chemical Weapons Convention. We look forward to its participation in such events, since that would only add to their value and promote fruitful dialogue.

In short, I once again appeal to all remaining non-parties in the Middle East to seriously consider

joining the Convention at an early date. Surely, taking that step would give significant impetus to advancing the aspirations of peace and security in the region.

Finally, I also appeal to the remaining States non-parties in Africa and the Caribbean. We hope that the few remaining States in Africa will soon join the rest of the continent in support of the Convention. I want to praise Africa for its strong endorsement of the Chemical Weapons Convention. In this context, I would encourage Congo, which presides over the African Union and is a member of the Security Council, but is not yet a member of the Chemical Weapons Convention, to take a leadership role in joining the Convention.

In the Caribbean subregion, despite the relevant decisions of the Organization of American States, which has formally called for the establishment of biological- and chemical-weapon-free zones in Latin America and for all countries to join the Chemical Weapons Convention, there are still three countries that are not yet States parties. Their non-participation is becoming increasingly difficult to understand. Those three countries must surely understand that, at this late stage, their absence and their seeming indifference, even if not inspired by any fundamental disagreement with the object and purpose of the Convention, in fact undermine it, and therefore put them increasingly at odds with the best interests of the international community. I therefore urge the Bahamas, Barbados and the Dominican Republic to take urgent and concrete steps to join the Convention. They are the only three countries in the whole of the Americas that are still not members of our Convention.

With apologies for the length of my statement, I would like to conclude by saying that we continue to make steady gains in implementing the programme priorities of the Convention. Gains are reflected in the sustained progress that we have made in ensuring a credible and transparent regime to both verify the destruction of chemical weapons and prevent their re-emergence; in consolidating our efforts to prepare for situations that might require the coordination of protection and assistance to Member States; in promoting international cooperation in the peaceful uses of chemistry; and, finally, in promoting universal adherence to the Convention.

Finally, I join the rest of the international community in expressing profound satisfaction about

the recommendation made earlier today by acclamation by the Security Council that the Foreign Minister of the Republic of Korea, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, be the next Secretary-General of the Organization. During his tenure as Foreign Minister of his country, he has not only proved a statesman of note, but has also made a specific contribution to the management of the Chemical Weapons Convention. We look forward to continuing our cooperation between the United Nations and my organization during his leadership of this important body.

The Chairperson: It is my intention now to provide the Committee with the opportunity to have an interactive discussion with our panellists by holding an informal question and answer session.

The meeting was suspended at 4.10 p.m. and resumed at 5.10 p.m.

The Chairperson: There has been one more request for the floor in exercise of the right of reply in response to this morning's meeting. Although we concluded the general debate at the end of that meeting, it is my intention, with your concurrence, to give the floor now to the representative of the Russian Federation.

Mr. Vasiliev (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): My delegation would like to exercise its right of reply in connection with the statement made by the representative of Georgia at this morning's meeting.

We deeply regret the statement that was made. Once again, the Georgians have made use of an international forum, more specifically the First Committee of the General Assembly, for their own purposes of propaganda in considering various aspects of Georgian-Russian relations, including the matter of military bases. That is not on our agenda.

In general I would like to state that Russia is fully compliant with the bilateral agreement established in 1999 in Istanbul and the Joint Statement of the Russian Federation and Georgia in annex 14 to the Final Act of the Conference of States Parties to the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe.

Moreover, on 31 March 2006, Russia and Georgia signed an agreement on a timeframe for temporary functioning followed by the withdrawal of Russian military bases and other military facilities in the trans-Caucasian region. Under that agreement, Georgia undertook to ensure security for the withdrawal of the

Russian bases and organizing the transport of the equipment involved.

Again, I am obliged to mention, with regret, that instead of creating normal conditions for the withdrawal of the Russian military technology, Georgia has been creating some kind of hysteria, as can be seen, *inter alia*, by the recent seizure of four Russian officers.

The statement of the Georgian representative also touched on the question of the situation concerning Abkhazia and Ossetia. Once again, we regret that the propaganda campaign being indulged in by Georgia is being carried out against a backdrop of seeking a military solution to the conflicts in Abkhazia and Ossetia.

There has been a build-up of military presence in the Kadori Valley, which is a violation of the Moscow agreement on ceasefire and separation of forces that was signed in 2004. The recent report of the Secretary-General bears witness to that in describing the situation between Abkhazia and Georgia.

The Georgian representative also raised the matter of a Russian military base in Gudauta. In mid-2001, Russia officially declared and officially notified members of the Treaty on Conventional Forces in Europe that the base had been closed and the land was being used by peacekeeping forces of the Commonwealth of Independent States, which were carrying out peacekeeping activities in the area of the conflict between Georgia and Abkhazia.

In 2002, an Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) monitoring group visited the base and confirmed that it had in fact been closed. Russia intends to comply with its obligations on the withdrawal of Russian military equipment from Georgia, despite the anti-Russian campaign that has been waged recently. Just a few days ago, Mr. Vladimir

Putin, the President of Russia, confirmed that. This year, we removed 45 per cent of our military equipment from the Russian military bases at Batumi and Akhalkalaki, 19 trains through the territory of Azerbaijan and six trains through the territory of Armenia.

The statement by the representative of Georgia also touched on the uncontrolled delivery of weapons to the region. We can confirm that but, unfortunately, that proliferation of weapons is related to the unprecedented military build-up by Georgia itself. Thus, it is our hope that other States, including non-regional States, will help to promote the normalization of the situation in the region and not allow the delivery of destabilizing weapons into Georgia.

The Chairperson: Before adjourning today's meeting, I should like to remind all delegations that the deadline for the submission of draft resolutions is this Wednesday, 11 October 2006, at 6 p.m. Delegations are urged to adhere to that deadline so that the Secretariat can process the documents in a timely manner. I strongly appeal to delegations not to wait until the last minute to submit their draft resolutions. By complying with that request, they will greatly assist in the speedy processing of the documents and help to minimize the possibility of error.

In that connection, I should also like to remind delegations that, in accordance with paragraph 28 of document A/61/250, the submitters are responsible for ensuring that the electronic and paper versions of the draft resolutions and decisions are identical in content.

I am aware that a number of delegations already submitted their draft resolutions last week. I should like to express my deep appreciation to those delegations for their early submission and to encourage others to follow suit.

The meeting rose at 5.20 p.m.